

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEHRAN 4982

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IR
SUBJ: DISCUSSION WITH SHAH ON INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF IRAN

1. DURING AUDIENCE WITH SHAH MORNING MAY 24 ON OTHER MATTERS, WE HAD LONG DISCUSSION ON INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF IRAN, WITH SPECIFIC EMPHASIS ON RECENT DISTURBANCES. SHAH REPEATED MANY OF HIS USUAL PERCEPTIONS OF CAUSES UNDERLYING SOCIAL UNREST, BUT ALSO LAID OUT HIS THINKING ABOUT DEALING WITH CURRENT SITUATION.

2. HE SAID, IN THE FIRST PLACE, THAT HE WOULD CONTINUE THE PROCESS OF LIBERALIZATION. THIS, HE SAID, WAS IRREVERSIBLE AND WAS A NATURAL COMPONENT OF THE MODERNIZATION PROCESS. MOREOVER, HE FELT HE OWED IT TO HIS SON TO INVEST HIM WITH A SET OF POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS WHICH WERE MORE OR LESS SELF SUSTAINING WHEN HE ASSUMES THE THRONE.

3. VIEWED IN THIS PERSPECTIVE, HE FELT THE GREATEST DANGER TO THE COUNTRY WAS NOT FROM THE RELIGIOUS DISSIDENTS, BUT FROM THE MARXISTS. THE "CLERGY" KNEW THAT THE PEOPLE OF IRAN WOULD NEVER ACCEPT TOTAL RELIGIOUS ORTHODOXY IN THE MOST PRIMITIVE SENSE. HENSE, THEY WOULD, IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, HAVE TO MAKE SOME COMPROMISE WITH
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MODERNIZATION.

4. BECAUSE OF THIS FACT, THE SHAH FELT HE COULD WORK OUT SOME UNDERSTANDINGS WITH RESPONSIBLE RELIGIOUS ELEMENTS. HE WAS HARSH ABOUT KHOMEINI AND FELT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO SATISFY HIM. ALTHOUGH FAR FROM FLATTERING IN HIS APPRAISAL OF SHARIATMADERI, HE INDICATED THAT HE

EXPECTED TO BE ABLE TO REACH SOME UNDERSTANDINGS WITH HIM THROUGH INTERMEDIARIES. HE SAID, HOWEVER, THAT THESE UNDERSTANDINGS WOULD HAVE TO INVOLVE MATTERS OF A RELIGIOUS AND MORAL CONTENT, RATHER THAN POLITICAL ISSUES.

5. HE SAID THAT, IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS, HE WOULD MAKE HIS ANNUAL PILGRIMAGE TO THE SHRINE OF IMAM REZA IN MASHAD. THIS WOULD GIVE HIM AN OPPORTUNITY TO TALK WITH MANY OF THE "CLERGY" AND PROVIDE HIM A POINT OF DEPARTURE FOR HIS DIALOGUE WITH RESPONSIBLE RELIGIOUS DISSIDENTS. HE SEEMED CONVINCED THAT THE CONTEST WITH THE "CLERGY" WOULD SOON BE AT AN END.

6. THE SHAH CONTINUED SCATHING IN HIS CHARACTERIZATION OF THE OLD NATIONAL FRONT GROUP. HE SAID IT WAS A MISTAKE FOR THE WESTERN PRESS TO LABEL THEM "LIBERAL" SINCE THEY HAD DEMONSTRATED THEIR AUTHORITARIAN NATURE IN THEIR TUDEH PAST. BUT, HE DISMISSED THEM AS WITHOUT DOMESTIC SIGNIFICANCE.

7. COMMENT: IN PURSUIT OF HIS TRADITIONAL TACTICS OF DIVIDING THE OPPOSITION, THE SHAH SEEMS SET UPON A COURSE OF SEEKING RECONCILIATION WITH THE ISLAMIC GROUPS AND DIVIDING THEM FROM THEIR TEMPORARY SECULAR ALLIES.
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